

*Presented by James Maxwell, LPC*

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# Making Ethical Decisions

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**Ethics: There's an App for That**

***Download*** your ethical  
decision-making assistant !

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# Goals for Ethics Presentation

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- ❖ Explore one's own methods of coming to ethical conclusions
- ❖ Illustration of a few models of the ethical decision making process
- ❖ The influence of cultural values and norms on ethical decision making
- ❖ Increase awareness of ethical considerations in everyday practice

What is ethics?

**Ethics**, sometimes known as **moral philosophy**, is a branch of **philosophy** that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong **conduct**, often addressing disputes of **moral diversity**.<sup>[1]</sup> The term comes from the **Greek** word ἠθικός *ethikos* from ἦθος *ethos*, which means "custom, habit"

Philosophical ethics investigates what is the best way for humans to live, and what kinds of actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances.

Ethics may be divided into three major areas of study:<sup>[1]</sup>

- **Meta-ethics**, about the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions and how their **truth values** (if any) may be determined
- **Normative ethics**, about the practical means of determining a moral course of action
- **Applied ethics** draws upon ethical theory in order to ask what a person is obligated to do in some very specific situation, or within some particular domain of action (such as business)

	Prediction	Action	Evaluation
Should	We believe we will act ethically		We believe we did act ethically
Want		We act unethically	

How most of us usually make ethical decisions.

- Check board rules
- Is it illegal?
- Consult with peers
- Assess danger of becoming involved with legalities
- Make decision

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# Ethics Pop Quiz

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Should a licensed therapist obey their board rules?

Yes or No or It Depends?

If a therapist knows that another therapist is not obeying board rules, should they inform the board?

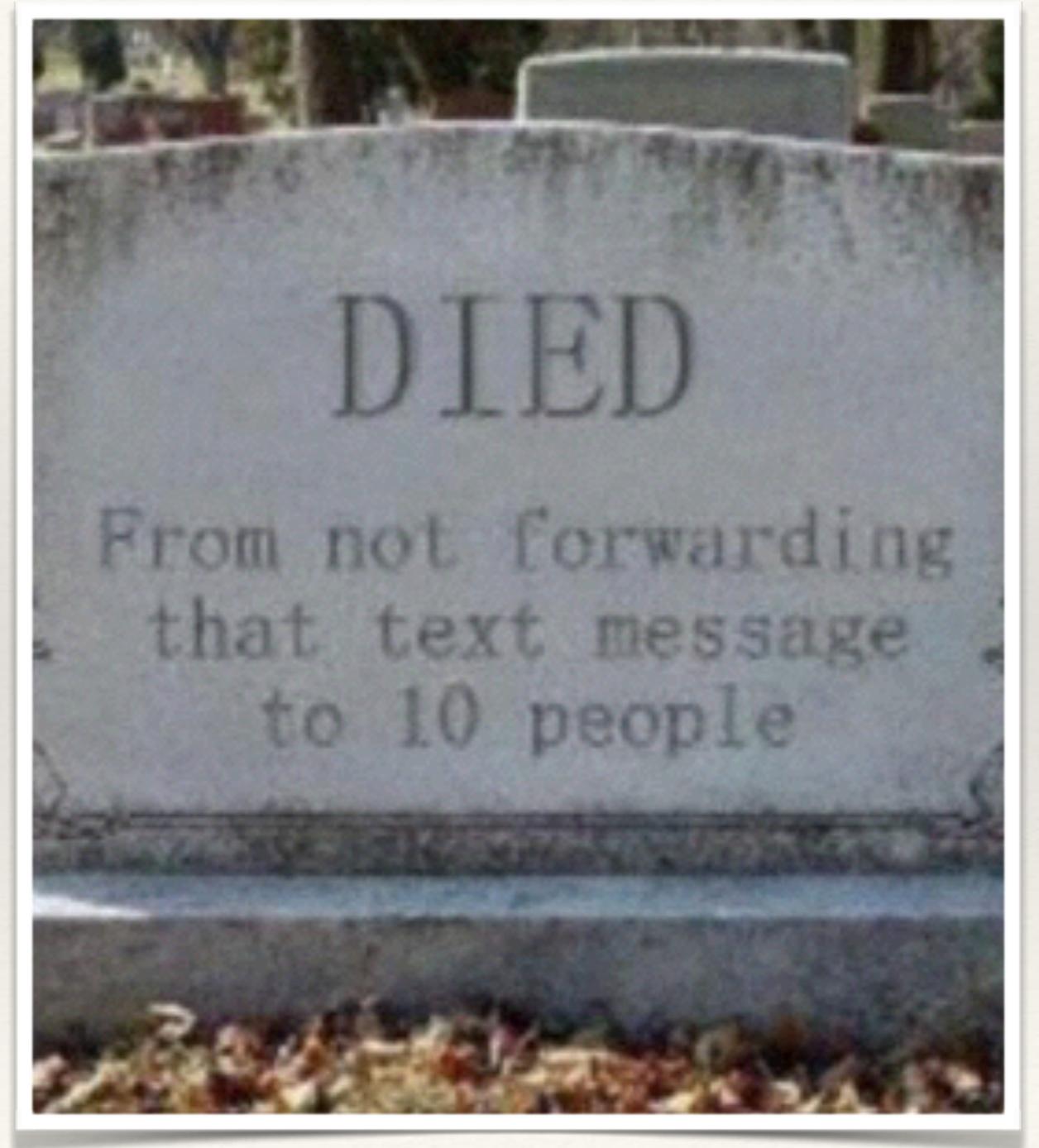
Yes or No or It Depends?

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# A question for you....

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Do you include in your informed consent intake document, how a client can get his or her records in case of your death?



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# LPC Board Rule # 681.41 (e)

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Prior to providing services a licensee shall inform an individual in writing of the following:

(8) the established plan for the custody and control of the client's mental health records in the event of the licensee's death or incapacity, or the termination of the licensee's counseling practice.

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# LPC Board Rule # 681.46

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## Licensees and the Board.

(a) Licensees are bound by the provisions of the Act and this chapter.

(b) A licensee shall have the responsibility of reporting alleged violations of the Act or this chapter to the board.

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# Oops...Ethical Dilemma

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"HOW'LL WE HANDLE THIS?"



*Practice Session 1*

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Please break into groups of three and discuss this dilemma:

Should you inform the board of other therapists who do not meet board rule 682.41 (e) (8). Please be prepared to explain how you came to a decision.

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# Ethical Decision Making Models

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If you have integrity,  
nothing else matters;  
if you don't have integrity,  
nothing else matters.  
— Alan K. Simpson

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# Standards-based Model

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- Based on the assumption that rules, laws, & policies provide the best basis for determining action.
- Determine primary dilemma
- Spell out ethical standards for response
- Determine if there is a reason to deviate
- Decide on course of action

# Principle Based Model

## Clarify

- Determine dilemma
- Formulate alternatives
- What key ethical principles and values involved Evaluate
- Is any ethical principle violated?
- Distinguish facts from beliefs, theories, opinions
- Consider credibility of sources
- Weigh the benefits, burdens and risks

## Decide

- Evaluate alternatives & determine consequences
- Prioritize ethical principles / values
- Consider the worst case scenario
- Apply principles

## Implement

- to maximize benefits & minimize costs & risks
- Monitor and modify
- as new information emerges

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# Virtues Based Model

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Considers that dispositions and habits enable us to act according to the highest potential of our character and on behalf of our values.

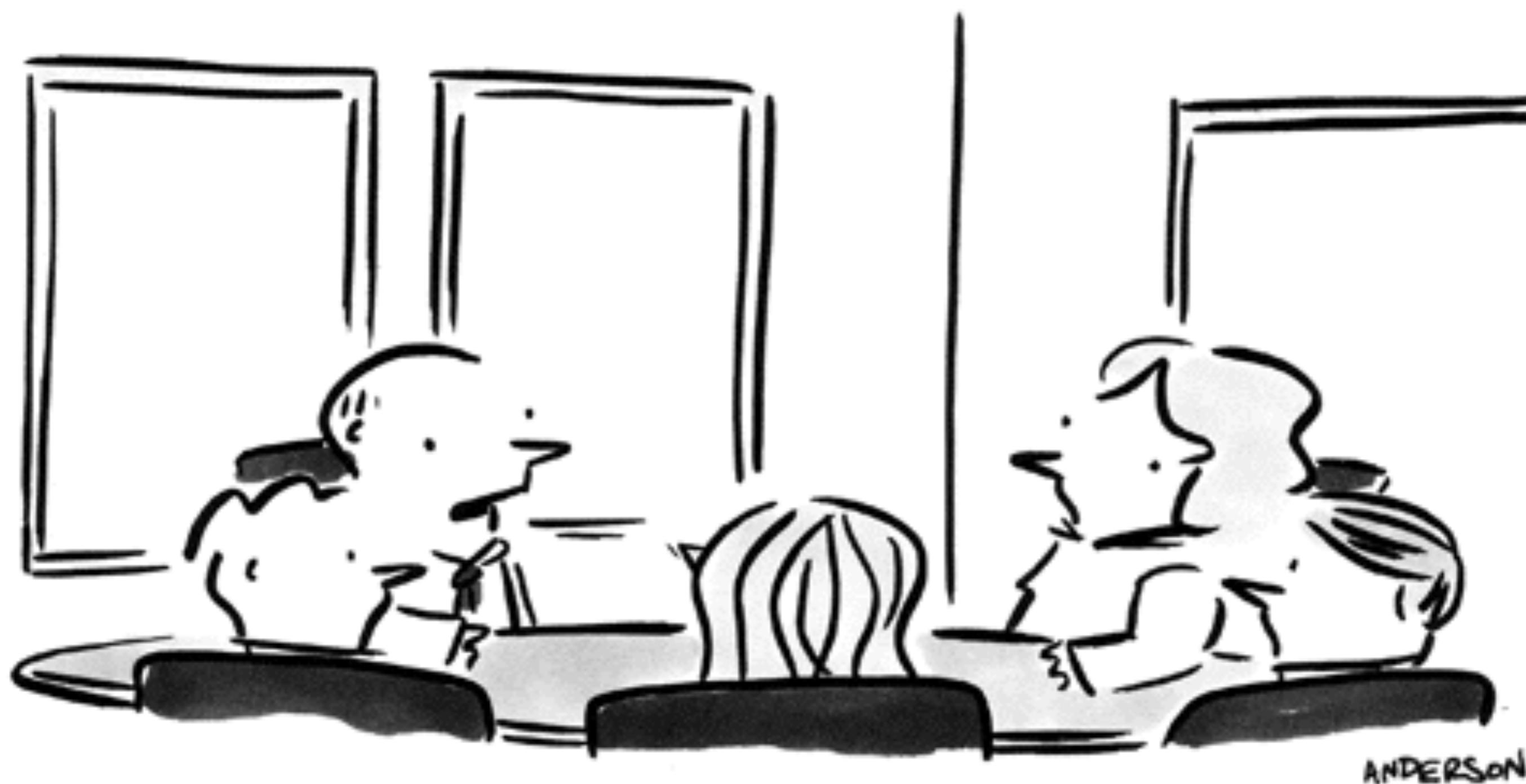
- Virtue ethics asks of any action:
  - What kind of person will I become if I do this?
  - Is this action consistent with my acting at my best?
  - Use virtues in considering options
- Make decision accordingly
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# Moral Reasoning Based Model

- Recognize the moral issue
- Make a judgment
- Establish intent
  - individual and situational variables
  - factors of opportunity and significant others
- Moral intensity (effect of decision on others)
  - concentration of effect and probability of effect
    - individual or group
    - likelihood of harm
    - closeness to the issue
    - agreement with society
    - magnitude of consequence(impact)
- Act

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"OK, now that we all agree, let's all go back to our desks and discuss why this won't work."

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# Practice Exercise # 1

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- ❖ You have a new client who is high profile, is it ethical to check him or her out on the internet.
- ❖ Apply this same question to a client who is not high profile but who presents with a story of malfeasance of some sort.
- ❖ Apply this to a regular client who you are seeing as individual who tells you disturbing things about their spouse. Do you check out the spouse on the internet?

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# Practice Exercise # 2

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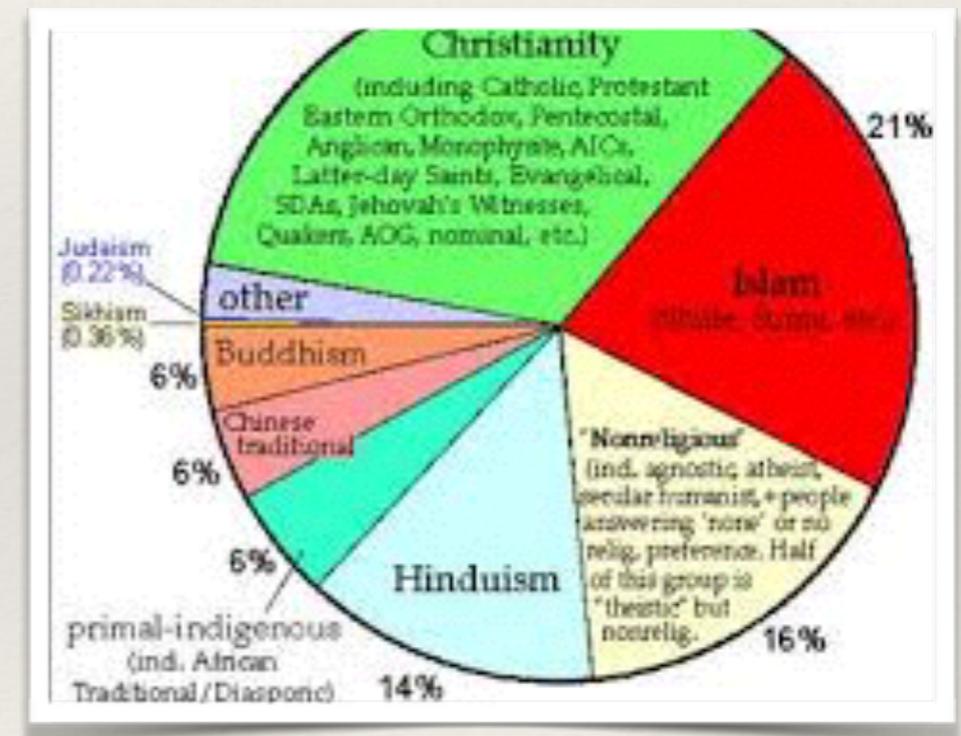
- ❖ Client has requested that you put a App on your phone that allows you to monitor her/his moods.
- ❖ Client is moving to another State / Country and requests Skype consultation from you on an ongoing basis.
- ❖ Client keeps sending you links that she/he thinks might be helpful to you in understanding their issue.

# Practice Exercise # 3

- ❖ Participants Choose from Ethical Questions that may have arisen for them around technological issues.

# Other Influences on Ethical Considerations

NO ONE IS ABOVE  
CULTURE'S INFLUENCE



“Culture is not your friend” — Terrance McKenna

# Moral Relativity vs Fundamentalism

*“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities,  
but in the expert’s there are few.”*

— *Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind: Informal Talks on Zen  
Meditation and Practice*

# The Question of Mental Illness

What has happened is this:

Biologically normal people can perform or engage in a very wide range of thinking and behavior, only a narrow portion of which is acceptable to people in any given society.

People, including psychiatrists, assume without proof that any thinking or behavior outside what is socially acceptable in any particular society must be caused by a biological abnormality.

This unfounded assumption results in people who think or do things others dislike being thought to have biological problems when in fact they have none.

When you falsely blame biological abnormality for behavior or thinking you dislike, you have created the myth of mental illness.

**"As our own species is in the process of proving, one cannot have superior science and inferior morals. The combination is unstable and self-destroying."** - Arthur C. Clarke (1917 - ), English Physicist and Science Fiction Author

**"Ethical living is the indispensable condition of all that is most worthwhile in the world."** - Ernest Caldecott, American Professor of Physiology

**"Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you."** - H. Jackson Brown, Jr., American Author